DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 266 600 EC 182 015

AUTHOR Meline, T.
TITLE Verbal Strategies by Specific Language Impaired.
PUB DATE Nov 85
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Speech-Hearing-Language Association (12th, Washington, DC, November 22-25, 1985).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communication (Thought Transfer); Elementary Education; *Language Handicaps; *Verbal Communication
IDENTIFIERS *Referential Communication

ABSTRACT

In an analysis of verbal strategies, 15 specific language impaired (SLI) children were compared with two groups of normally developing children: age-mates and language-mates. Communicative success or failure was ascertained in tasks requiring Ss to verbally communicate novel referents to an adult. Ss' utterances prior to and following perceived failure were analyze. Results indicated three referential strategies: (1) association of known referent to the novel drawing; (2) description of the novel referent; and (3) mixed responses. SLI and age-mate groups relied on the description strategy significantly more often than language-mates. Further, following a communicative obstacle, age-mate and language-mate Ss adopted a new strategy significantly more often than SLI Ss. SLI Ss failed to respond significantly more often than the other two groups. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

Paper presented at the meeting of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Washington, D.C., November 1985

ED266600

Snyder and McLean suggested that language intervention ". . . focus less on the products of language development and more on the processes, or strategies, critical to such development" (1977, p. 341). A focus on adding new strategies or modifying existing strategies is likely to bring about the most efficacious treatment.

However, in order to accomplish this feat, effective strategies and existing strategies must be identified. Toward this end, McLean and McLean (1977) have described several possible language-learning strategies. In addition, investigators such as Chapman and Kohn (1977) have conceived research in which various strategies are identified. The present study examined strategies used in communicating new information both prior to and following perceived failure. As Dweck and Licht (1980) have noted, failure has dramatic effects on performance. "For some children, these effects are positive ones. . . . For other children, the effects are quite the reverse: Efforts are curtailed, strategies deteriorate, and performance is often severely disrupted" (Dweck & Licht, p. 197).

The following questions were addressed: 1. Are specific language impaired and normally developing children distinguished by the verbal strategies used in communicating new information? and 2. Do verbal strategies vary before and following perceived failure?

EC182015

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
J. Meline
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Procedure

Subjects

Fifteen specific language impaired children were compared with two groups of normally developing children: age-mates and language-mates. Language impaired subjects had no identifiable neurologic, visual, or hearing impairments. Fifteen age-mates were chosen on the basis of chronological age and 15 language-mates were chosen on the basis of linguistic maturity. Subject characteristics are given in Table 1.

Method

A communication task required each subject to verbally communicate novel referents to an adult. Communicative success or failure was signaled by the adult's response. In the case of communicative failure, the adult made an explicit statement, "I don't understand." Subjects' utterances prior to and following perceived failure were analyzed across a number of variables, including strategies employed.

In order to evaluate subjects' responses for communicative effectiveness, 10 independent listeners chose referents based on each subject's verbal communications. The result was a score from 0 to 10 for each communication with 0 representing the lowest possible value and 10 the highest.

Results

Analyses of subjects' responses yielded a number of interesting results. Three referential strategies were identified: (1) the association of a known referent to the novel drawing; for example, "I think it's a birdie," "Looks like a moustache," or "This one sorta looks like a pretzel or a corn

curl." (2) a description of the novel referent; for example, "It goes up and down and up and down and up and down and up and down and up and down," or "It has four lines and they all have curves on them," and (3) mixed responses (those which combined the first two strategies). Figure 1 displays the communicative values for each strategy across subject groups. The use of a known referent was a significantly more successful strategy for all groups. The age-mate group was more effective than SLI and language-mate groups when using the known referent strategy. The SLI group was more effective than the other two groups when using descriptions of the novel referent. A known referent strategy was clearly the most effective strategy. In addition, since the description of the novel referent strategy proved to be rather burdensome in terms of communicative length, the known referent strategy was also more economical.

The frequency of using certain strategies varied across subject groups. A known referent strategy was used about equally across groups (SLI = 71%, AM = 68%, LM = 70%). However, SLI and age-mate groups relied on the description of the novel referent strategy significantly more often than language-mates (SLI = 22%, AM = 28%, LM = 11%). Language-mates mixed known referent and description of the novel referent strategies significantly more often than the others (LM = 19%, SLI = 7%, AM = 4%).

Figure 2 compares responses by the three groups following a communicative obstacle. Age-mate and language-mate groups adopted a new strategy significantly more often than SLI children. Conversely, SLI children failed to respond significantly more often than age-mates and language-mates.

Summary

Overall, results suggest that specific language impaired children are superior to language-mates when communicating novel referents and less effective than age-mates. SLI children are more likely to use descriptions of the novel referents than age-mates and language-mates. Finally, SLI children are more likely than age-mates and language-mates to not respond following a communicative obstacle.

References

Chapman, Robin S. & Kohn, Lawrence L. (1977). Comprehension strategies in two and three-year-olds: Animate agents or probable events? In Papers and reports in child language development. Stanford, CA: Stanford University.

Dweck, Carol S. & Licht, Barbara G. (1980). Learned helplessness and intellectual achievement. In J. Garber & M.E.P. Seligman (Eds.), Human helplessness: Theory and applications. New York: Academic.

Snyder, L. & McLean, J. (1977). Deficient acquisition strategies: A proposed conceptual framework for analyzing severe language deficiency. American Journal of Mental Deficiency, 81, 338-349.

Snyder-McLean, L. & McLean, J. (1978). Verbal information gathering strategies: The child's use of language to acquire language. Journal of Speech & Hearing Disorders,

Table 1. Characteristics of specific language impaired, age-mate, and language-mate subjects.

Subjects	Mean		
	C.A.(mos.)	MLUm	Receptive Language(mos.)
SLI	98	4.98	86.2
AM	97.7	--	122.8
LM	62.3	5.04	84.4

Figure 1

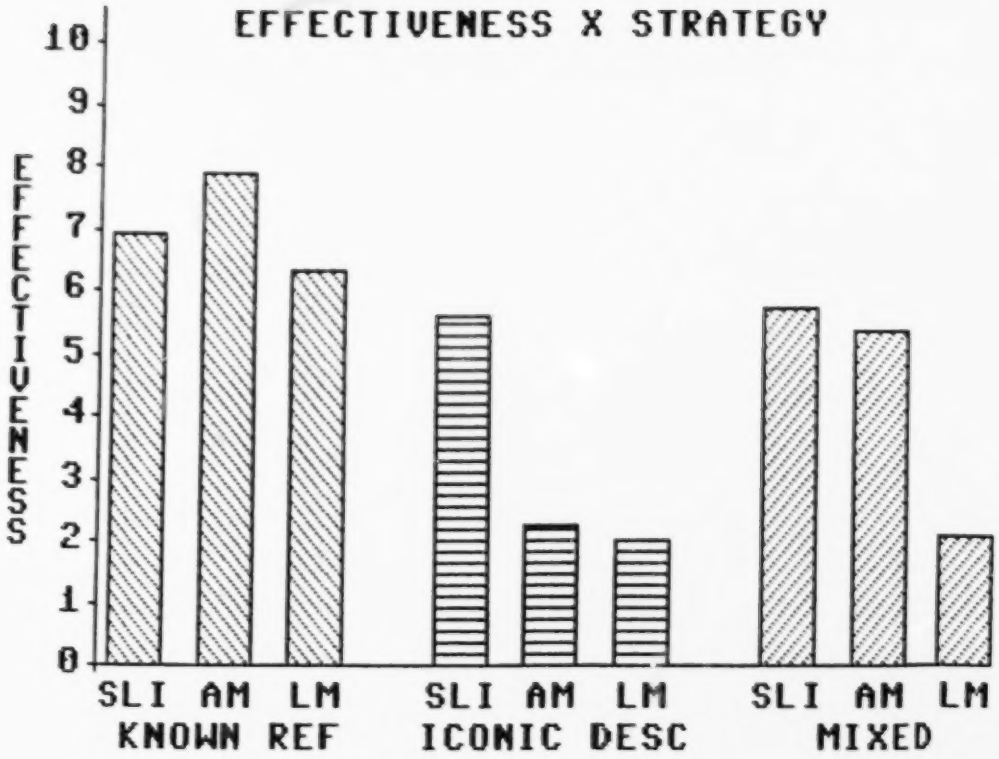
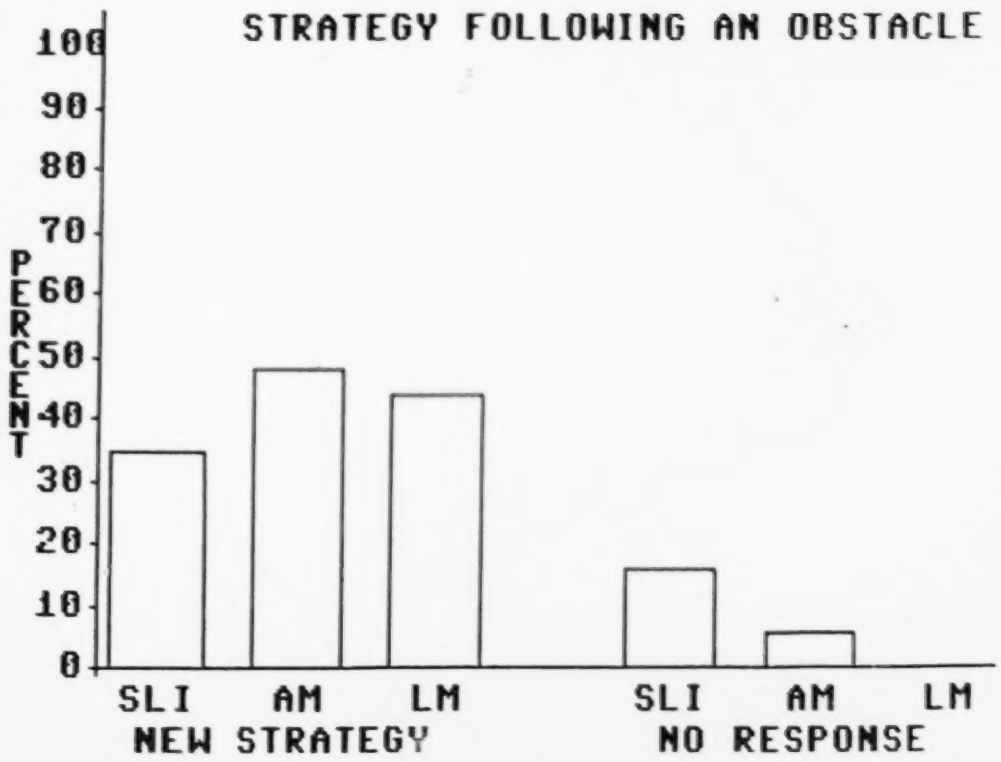

EFFECTIVENESS X STRATEGY
EFFECTIVENESS
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
SLI AM LM SLI AM LM SLI AM LM
KNOWN REF ICONIC DESC MIXED

Figure 2


STRATEGY FOLLOWING AN OBSTACLE
PERCENT
100
90
80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
SLI
AM
LM
SLI
AM
LM
NEW STRATEGY
NO RESPONSE